

Wind Power Task Force

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For the Sake of Our Planet

*The only thing necessary for the triumph of Evil is for
good men to do nothing.*

-Edmund Burke 1795

Some fifty years ago Jonas Salk , after developing the polio vaccine, began to speak of broader human concerns, and gradually focused his attention on what he called our “sick planet”. He felt that unless we discover within ourselves “our own healing power” it would get unmanageably sicker.

At that time nuclear war was the overriding threat, but now climate change is even greater, and even less under human control. There are,however, possibilities we may mitigate it if we act now.

Our planet is sick, and you find yourselves in the role of caregivers. Twenty one years ago the crisis was nuclear, and six years ago terrorism, but now the greatest threat of all time is climate change. In responding, there are common resistances:

- The inability to change behavior and thinking rapidly enough to adapt to profound and sudden changes in the global environment.
- The propensity to deny reality when threatened, frustrated, or frightened.
- The inevitable mutual formation of “the image of the enemy” by groups with different views, (even though the goal, survival, is the same).
- The powerful effect of emotions in shaping decisions.

Although far greater in magnitude, climate change can be seen as a disease infecting the planet, and thus we can compare it to smallpox. (This is overly optimistic, as we were able to

eradicate smallpox, and can hope only to mitigate climate change). Climate change, as was smallpox, is widespread, it affects all, it is deadly, and there is no cure. Unlike smallpox, climate change cannot be eradicated, but with a concerted world wide cooperative effort we can at least slow and modify it, while developing other responses.

To do this we must change the way we think. The environment is continuing to undergo long term changes, but which we are greatly accelerating. Now we must adapt to it (and one essential step in adaptation is conservation).

Survival of the fittest defines fitness as *the ability to adapt to environment*. Thinking as we now think, living as we now do, and dependent on fossil fuels as we now are - these are the roots of the problem. Alternate energy sources must, and can, be found, and the use of wind power, while not the ultimate answer, will provide us time to both find alternate sources, and also to change our thinking and our life style.

Forty years ago, as he circled the Earth, Apollo IX Astronaut

Russell Schweikert said:

You realize that on that small spot, that little blue and white thing, is everything that means anything to you. All of history and music and poetry and art and birth and love; tears, joy, games. All of it on that little spot out there that you can cover with your thumb.

We are one species, on one planet, and to survive we must learn to resolve – not eliminate – conflict. Conflict is part of life, and leads to progress through resolution thus allowing focus on the real issues.

In the past we were able to adapt to the discovery of fire, and we have been able to change our thinking regarding human sacrifice, slavery, and the nuclear threat. In the 1960's Everett Rogers developed a theory of social change, which, he said, began with the Innovators, about 2.5%, leading to awareness of the Early Adopters, some 13%, then the Early and Late Majorities,

16% each, and finally the Laggards, who may not ever get the message. We are probably now in the Early Adapter stage, and we must push ahead.

In your review of the massive amounts of data before you, you have repeatedly found several key words, words such as *reasonable, appropriate, undue, adverse, inappropriate, and acceptable*. They all carry some level of emotion, and emotion is not bad. It is, after all, what makes us human. But it can greatly impact how we make decisions, and not always to our benefit.

In your caregiving role, you are making significant decisions about wind power, when where and how it will exist.

Decision by its very nature carries the meaning of *cutting away*, leaving something behind, and at times that something left behind will be of value, causing decision making to be difficult. Decisions must be made about trapped miners, about a damaged shuttle and the return of the astronauts, removing a gangrenous

leg to save a life, or to jettison the gold from the weather stressed ship.

Any decision is to some degree emotionally driven, at times almost exclusively so. Examples are current advertising, political campaigning, or maybe even having that piece of pie, or ice cream, (or both). But emotions change rapidly, as does Maine weather, and decisions based on emotion rarely are as solid as those based on factual data, with a minimum of emotion. The power of emotion may lead to a new expression, “the Appalachian Trail syndrome”, that is the wish and need to “keep things as they were”. If an emotion is too powerful it will lead to denial, the shutting off and inability to accept the reality causing the emotion. We tend then to hang on to the old values, and resist seeing any change, lulling us into a false sense of security.

Consider here the fate of lobsters – some consider immersion in boiling water to be the proper way to cook them. A well known restaurant in New York however suggests wrapping them in a

cloth and putting them in cold water, then increasing the heat gradually so they pleasantly go to sleep, and are supposedly more tender when eaten. There's little in either case that the lobster can do to escape, but in our case if we face reality and let ourselves feel the heat, without denial, we can avoid being lulled to sleep, and may make some meaningful changes.

Friendship is critical to our social structure, and friends are vital for our well being. They are supportive, and may become emotionally highly involved. They take care of us in time of need, and speak for us when we cannot speak for ourselves. Friends of the Western Mountains and of the Boundary Mountains are to be commended for their efforts in behalf of those entities. So too Audubon for its support of the Bicknell thrush, the bog lemming, and AMC which seeks to protect the AT.

Inherent in friendship however in addition to caring is emotion, and feeling a close identity. For these very reasons, friends are not necessarily or always the best decision makers.

Doctors make difficult decisions regarding their patients, and thus although doctors can, and need to, be *friendly*, only rarely and in special circumstances can they be *friends*.

Audubon and AMC are venerable and respected institutions. I've been a member of both for many years, and have hiked small sections of the AT. My first view of Katahdin was some 65 years ago. I work with the Volunteer Lake Monitoring Program, with my local lake association, and serve on my local Planning Board. I care about the environment and how it looks now. I care even more about how it will look to my children, and to their children. Katahdin does not look now as it did when I first saw it. There is no way to "keep things as they were".

Sadly, Audubon and AMC do not seem to appreciate the inevitable and ongoing visual alterations, the alterations in habitat, and the extinction of species stemming from climate change. The recent report from the Union of Concerned Scientists detailed the loss of colder climates in Maine as tropical ones move

north, leaving polar bears less and less Arctic ice to rest on.

Audubon reports increased mercury levels in the Bicknell thrush due to acid rain, and testimony a year ago before LURC noted the asynchrony in the arrival of migrating birds and the ripening of buds upon which they feed.

You are in the position of doctors with a sick patient, our Planet. Your decisions will be critical, and most difficult. It may be necessary to *cut away*, i.e., sacrifice, some of what we have valued and treasured. The crisis of climate change is real and time to respond is limited. There are changes, such as wind turbines, that some now oppose in order to preserve things as they were and as they want them. But without those efforts at mitigation, climate change may well bring about much more devastating consequences.

Our planet is ill. Major decisions that to some may seem radical need to be made. There is no choice. When the ship is sinking we cannot choose the color of the life boat or the shape of

the oars. And if there are not enough life boats, we may not be able to take with us all of the animals on board.

The western and boundary mountains have their advocates as do the thrush and the lemming. The question before you now becomes;

Who Speaks for the Earth?